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THE CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.



THE CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.
A NOVEL.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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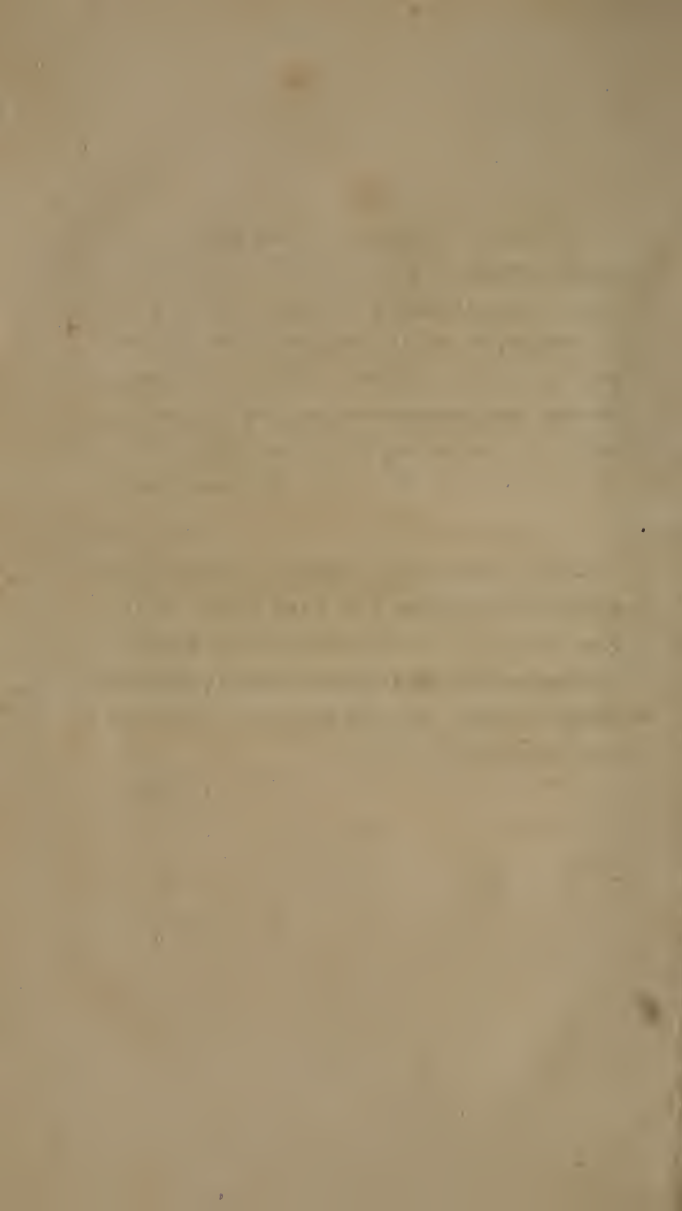
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—“ Shall we say that God hath joined error, fraud, unfitness, wrath, contention, perpetual loneliness, perpetual discord? Whatever lust, or wine, or witchery, threat or enticement, avarice or ambition, hath joined together, faithful or unfaithful, christian with anti-christian, hate with hate, or hate with love—shall we say this is God’s joining :”

MILTON, *Tetrac.*

—“ But unfitness and contrariety frustrate and nullify for ever, unless it be a rare chance, all the good and peace of wedded conversation, and leave nothing between them enjoyable, but a prone and savage necessity, not worth the name of marriage, unaccompanied with love.”

Id. Colast.



CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

THAT evening gave a new character to my existence. I no longer retained a passion for solitude. The winter was devoted to continual dissipation ; and the hours which I did not spend in company were passed in indolence and stupor.

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Sometimes I compelled myself, as a kind of penance, to attend college lectures. But oh how bitterly was I disappointed !—If in the eloquence of *one* inspired lecturer there were occasional gleams of sensibility and genius, how could this compensate for such a fearful counterpoise of dulness and inanity !

But my feelings were morbid. They were not like those of any other being on earth. I was alternately roused to madness, and sunk in the most abject and hopeless debility.

Sometimes, too, I was again assailed by more serious fits of bodily illness, from

which it was with difficulty that I recovered.

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After the return of spring, there were times when, as if emerging from the gloom of insanity, I wandered out to meet the glories of the reviving year,—when I heard the blackbird's voice amid the grove, and every note revived the feelings of “early time”—gone, never to return.

As I walked out one morning to the ruins of Craigmillar, and met the warm breeze of spring, I composed a long Ode, of which, however, I now remember only the first lines :

Oh Heavens ! I meet the zephyr's wing
 Wafting each odour of the spring.

Hark ! 'tis the blackbird's melody ;
 And I hear the skylark's voice on high.
 My feverish brow is cool'd ; I feel

My long-lost raptures rise anew :
 Oh come, ye mystic forms, and steal
 As wont upon my raptured view !
 What soothing thoughts of early time,
 What visionary hopes sublime,
 Are floating o'er my wilder'd brain,
 Rousing the long-forgotten strain !

[* * *]

I remember there was a rivulet which
 crossed the high-road, and, irresistibly
 tempted, I quitted the beaten path, and
 followed its wanderings. I met the 'in-
 spiring gales of the south-west ; I heard

the lark carolling on high ; I saw the sun-beams reflected on the water. I looked around—all was enchantment—I seemed to look again on every object with the eye of a poet,—to awake once more to a “ new heaven and a new earth.”

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As the long-lost feelings of my past years revived, how bitter was my remorse at the weakness and depravity into which I had fallen ! Awakening Hope for a moment shed her light on my path. But, alas ! it was but for a moment. I returned to Edinburgh. The spectre forms of real life again banished the beauties of

Nature and the fairy visions of poetry. Sometimes, when the south wind blew, I fled early in the mornings of April to the green hills of Braid ; whence I beheld the shifting hues of light and shade play over the varied and magnificent landscape, as the passing clouds that fled before the wind now hid and now revealed the morning sun. Oh that I had then possessed the power of arresting my emotions, and the transient gleams that sometimes played on my fancy ! Now, alas ! when I strive to revive them, they fade from my feverish grasp,—from my wearied eyes !—Worn by new anxieties, depressed by sickness, how can I hope to delineate the varied feelings of those hours of awakening rapture, mingled with bit-

ter reflection,—those floating dreams, which are like the purple glow of twilight on the rocky summit of Ben Cruachan, that dyes the heath-bell double red,—beautiful indeed ! but the vision fades ere we have well contemplated its charms ; and the clouds of night in the one instance, and the spectre forms of real life in the other, blot it out, not only from our immediate perception, but almost from remembrance.

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About this time I received a letter from my father, expressing anxiety for my return to Argyleshire,—an anxiety increased by ill health. I left Edinburgh

immediately. When I set out, it was a day of inspiration,—but not so to me. I saw the partial gleams of sunshine floating on the opposite shores of Fife, shifting their influence from field to field, and from rock to rock. The breezes blew perfume from the verdant fields and budding trees. But my fevered brow was not cooled,—my anxiety was excessive.

Mine was that desolation of the heart which admits of no fellowship with happiness, or with virtue!—under whose influence the wasted sufferer acknowledges himself a blot on the fair face of Nature, and, unless his fate should alter, wishes only for impenetrable shades, where he may expire unwept, unhonoured, unpri-

tied, and unknown. I was leaving at Edinburgh all that was dear to me,—all that could render life desirable. I was hurrying on to scenes of gloom and solitude, and pain and misery.

The exquisite charms which attend the revival of spring are dear to every “happy soul.” But to the mind corroded by ceaseless anxiety, the cheering sunbeams, and the fragrance of the gale, only awaken recollections of past enjoyment, and past illusions, gone never to return, which agonize with bitter pangs by their contrast.

My father’s illness was long and painful; and his mental faculties were so

much debilitated, that he could not bear to be for a moment in solitude.

I had dreadful sufferings to endure in watching the slow progress of his recovery. Frequently his illness seemed to increase, rather than abate ; and much of that finest and most interesting part of the year, which I had been accustomed to devote to the most brilliant creations of poetic imagination, was wasted in gloom and feverish debility.

In truth, the life of a person of morbid sensibility is a perpetual warfare. Every day, every night, every hour furnish trials of his patience and his fortitude, more than equal to those which, to

an ordinary individual, could arise from the hardships and dangers of a campaign. Sometimes I tried to grasp at the dim and distant forms which formerly flitted across my fancy. But it was impossible. My whole feelings were absorbed in anxiety, and a rayless murkiness of mind, which those only have experienced, who, before the attacks of adversity, have been accustomed to indulge in day-dreams, brilliant (and, alas, as fleeting!) as the morning cloud.

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The spring advanced. I was in the midst of the self-same scenery that had once elevated my soul to rapture, and in

which I had sported many a day in all the jocund freedom of childhood : But now I could scarcely command a moment to breathe the freshness of the zephyr ; and, alas ! when I was apparently at liberty, I was not so in reality. Fevered by restraint and confinement, and above all, by a degree of mental disquietude and suspense the most painful and oppressive, I could not enjoy the charms of the scenery and the season. They only served to awake remembrances of former ecstasy, and increase by contrast the bitterness of my sufferings.

Sometimes for a brief interval former delights would revive with a faint glow ; but ere the visions could be arrested,

they faded away, and left a dreary void, anon to be peopled by imagery of disorder, desolation, and despair.

Frequently, too, I indulged myself in day-dreams of Lady L——. I beheld her lovely form,—her angelic smile. I imagined I heard her voice in tones of consolation and encouragement. Then a weight of recollected sorrow banished the illusion. A chill shuddering seized my frame ; and I was obliged for a moment to rush rapidly along the walks, to prevent by bodily motion the sense of suffocation.

At length the clouds passed away by which I was overwhelmed. The season of spring attained the zenith of its charms; and I found myself once more at liberty to enjoy them.

CHAPTER II.

I now visited the Priory. I had been told that the new decorations were finished. The woods began to resume their magnificence of attire. The young leaves of the birch, exhaling the most exquisite odours, had expanded on every spray, and now loaded with their balmy sweets every gale. The waves of Loch Owe danced merrily in the partial gleams of the vernal sun, as the west wind gently ruffled the water.

With what agitation, what oppressive

and overwhelming rapture did I hear that Lady L——— was expected by her servants, and had given orders to have the Priory prepared for her reception! She had resolved to resign her intention of spending the fashionable season in London, and to remain at Edinburgh till the beauty of the weather should produce a desire of visiting Argyleshire.

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A few weeks after this I understood that Lady L——— had arrived. It was impossible for me to restrain my love of wandering near the spot where I had first heard her voice,—had first beheld her beautiful form. It was in the twilight of

an evening in May that I had left my father's house, and taken the usual path to the Priory. This was a season of the year at which I could not rest. I could not curb my enthusiastic passion for the mountain, the heath, the lake, and the river.

It was a lovely evening. Twilight diffused her most exquisite influence over the cliffs and groves. The venerable ruins of Kilchurn Castle were tinted with that amber radiance, which, at this season of the year, continues all night through in the north of Scotland, not even disappearing at midnight.

I wandered on, led by the mysterious

influence that guides the lonely steps of the poet at the twilight hour. As I approached the margin of the lake, a strain of the most exquisite music, that

——“seem’d an angel’s whisper’d call
To an expiring saint,”*

arose from the ruins. I stood enraptured, yet hardly daring to believe that the voice and the harp were those of Lady L——, but rather of some disembodied spirit, who assumed her tone and manner. As I listened, however, I could no longer doubt. The music continued for a considerable time, during which my fancy was wound

* Bridal of Triermain.

up to the highest pitch of extravagance. At length it ceased, and I beheld her form emerging from the mouldering gateway, and approaching the rocky margin of the island. An attendant carried her harp, and she prepared to enter a small boat. I had approached close to the shore, and my figure was partly concealed by a wooded promontory. At this moment I heard a sudden noise, as of a person plunging into the water, followed by loud screams. I perceived Lady L——— had fallen into the lake, and that the screams proceeded from her terrified attendant. I instantly rushed through the water to her assistance, and clasping her in my arms, brought her to shore on the main land.

Never did the feelings of that moment die in my bosom, or cease to agitate my frame. I bore her in my arms. The cool breeze of evening blew on us, and wafted her glossy locks from her forehead. The faint glow of twilight added a mysterious beauty to her countenance, and her bosom half revealed by the disorder of her dress. Her drenched garments too plainly shewed the luxury of her form. It was a moment of ecstasy, of inebriation, of madness.

Her attendants approached. I resigned my charge with reluctance. I thought she sighed mournfully—I thought she pressed my hand as I left her to the care of her female companion.

I returned in a state of delirium to my father's house. I purposed the next day to send to the Priory, with an enquiry for the health of Lady L———; but this was rendered needless by a card which arrived early in the morning, accompanied by a copy of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." The card was filled with the most flattering expressions of gratitude, and compliments to my "bravery and readiness of exertion."

Some days were passed without any farther intercourse with Lady L———. I could not indeed refrain from indulging myself in occasional walks towards the Priory; and one fine morning at sunrise, being on the rude terrace on which I had

first beheld its inhabitant, I was seized with a momentary gleam of inspiration, and sketching a few lines with a pencil, which I have now forgot, left them on a seat which was cut out of the rock.

The following morning, after a restless and fevered night, I retraced my steps towards the place I had visited the preceding day. The birds carolled loudly amid the groves. The purple rays of morning rested on the scenery. With what ecstasy did I behold a slip of paper different from that which I had left ! It contained an invitation to the Priory for next evening, but so artfully expressed, that only to the writer of my verses could the note have been intelligible. I shed a flood of tears

over the paper, rolled it in three covers, and laid it on my heart. I now felt myself as it were a new character,—as if estranged from former ties,—from all those tedious formalities and insipid sentiments and rules for conduct, that used formerly to curb the freedom of my soul. I looked with contempt on them all. I had awoke as if to a new heaven and earth,—to new hopes, that never before had arisen,—indefinite hopes, that even their indistinctness rendered more exquisite. She had then read the lines. She had approved of them. They had even afforded her pleasure. The thought was ecstasy ! It was long before, in the tumult of my feelings, I could fix on any distinct idea. I wished to write to her again, but

could not determine on any form of expression. I rushed through the fields and woods, as I formerly used to do in affliction and anxiety. It was my resource alike in joy and sorrow. I remember it was a lovely day. The sky was serene : but the landscape was invested with that gossamery haze,—without a certain degree of which all the charms of the finest scenery are in great measure lost, and through which medium even ordinary prospects acquire a character of sublimity and grandeur. I had never before seen the face of Nature so beautiful. It is impossible to describe the state of bliss, of inspiration, of unutterable ecstasy, when every gleam of sunshine on the waves of the lake is answered by a corresponding

light of joy in the bosom. Oh how cold, how confined are the raptures of the mere worldling, in whose heart the love of Nature's beauty never found a place, compared to *his* triumph, *his* exultation, whose affections and emotions are blended and indissolubly connected with the glorious hues of the sky, the ineffable influence of the seasons, the fields, woods, and rivers !

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With what impatience did I wait for evening ! The interval seemed an age. Yet I trembled when the hour drew near, and I bent my steps to the Priory. Many times did my spirits die within me, and I almost resolved to shun what I had waited

for with such impatience. I thought I never should be able to keep this appointment. My sight grew dim. A chilling coldness and oppressive heat pervaded my frame by turns. I was insensible to all that passed around me. I almost dropt on the ground from faintness, and the tears filled my eyes. I know not how I had proceeded on my way ; but at length I heard the seraphic sounds of a large Eolian harp, and found myself drawing near to the Priory.

In a state of the most overpowering ecstasy I passed through a dusky aisle, filled with rare and costly exotics, which diffused the most exquisite odour, and at length entered the library, where, by the

sombre light of a large coloured lamp, whose tints beautifully harmonized with the glow of twilight, I beheld Lady L—— and her female companion. Instantly rising from her red velvet ottoman, she welcomed me in the most graceful and flattering manner, and began a lively and spirited conversation, alluding to the beauties of Highland scenery, “of which,” added she, “I am greatly deceived if you are not an enthusiastic admirer. We have come to explore the wonders of this region of enchantment, and greatly are we in want of a *cicerone* to guide our steps through these magic realms. Perhaps, when your more important engagements permit, you will have the kindness to as-

sist us with your counsels, and enliven our retirement with your company.”

Let those only who have known the delight of associating an adored image with the finest scenery of Nature, endeavour to appreciate my rapture at this invitation ! My delirium was too great to admit of my preserving any distinct remembrance of what passed during the remainder of my visit. I remember it was concluded with forming an engagement to explore with Lady L——, on the following day, one of the most remarkable scenes in our neighbourhood. As I returned home in the magic twilight of a summer's eve, and breathed the perfume of the woods, and saw the wild tints

of the northern sky rest upon the scenes, in what visions of anticipated delight did my imagination revel and luxuriate !

Next morning, at the appointed hour, I went with a beating heart to keep my appointment.

Lady L—— and her companion were prepared to set out. Acting as their leader and guide, I directed their steps to a truly singular and lovely scene, to which there was an easy access, and which, though perfectly concealed from ordinary observation, was at no great distance from the Priory.

Entering by a narrow ravine, amid

precipitous rocks, there is a grassy glade of several acres in extent, perfectly surrounded by cliffs of the most stupendous height, fringed with wild wood, the abode of the eagle and of innumerable falcons. Through this concealed and narrow valley runs a considerable stream of the purest water, which dashing with violence through the rocks at the further end, reverberates among the cliffs with a strange but delightful murmur. This haunted glade is diversified by numerous little eminences, covered with oak and birch, which are universally believed to be inhabited by fairies, who have been frequently seen by the adventurous shepherd in the still and serene moonlight of an autumnal eve. Then also their revels

are accompanied by music of the most exquisite and ravishing sweetness.

This day was only the commencement of an era of the most rapturous and unmixed felicity. Every night I went to sleep remembering the concluding line of my favourite Lycidas—

“To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new ;”

for every morning ushered in new enchantments, and new excursions in the same delightful society. Every scene that I had loved from my earliest years was explored by the fascinating Lady L——. Not a vision seemed ever to have entered my own mind in which she was not ready

to participate, even with more than my own enthusiasm. I had awoke as it were to a new existence ; a Paradise, which realized all the wildest fictions of romance.

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The time at length approached when the fascinating object of my adoration was to fulfil a promise of spending the autumn with a select party of friends on the Cumberland lakes. She left the Priory.

I spent the autumn in a sublime and delightful melancholy. I composed poems deprecating the absence of the divinity whom I adored, mingling my complaints

with descriptions of that inspiring though mournful season.

Estranged from all society, I lived only for such pursuits. My solitary musings were wilder than ever.

When the time arrived for my return to Edinburgh in the winter, I prepared to leave the country almost without regret. The ties of filial duty were insufficient to restrain my delight at the idea of again beholding Lady L—— amid the splendour of a city life. I had spent one evening at her house the preceding winter ; but it was with a large and promiscuous assembly. Lady L—— was then the great magnet of attraction in the

fashionable circles in which she moved. Her fascinating manners, and her arts to subdue the tedium of artificial life, were indeed irresistible.

I went to Edinburgh. One of my first employments there was to wait on Lady L——. She was entering her barouche when I approached her elegant mansion in Charlotte Square.

With a smile, which seemed to me truly angelic, she welcomed my return to Edinburgh, adding, “Should you not have any better engagement, we shall be at home in the evening.”—She was here interrupted, and the carriage drove off.

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Reclined on her sofa, reading by the light of a large chandelier, I found Lady L—— alone! Her dress was studiously elegant; and I was struck, more than on any former occasion, with the luxury of her form and attitude. The Lyrics and Epistles of Moore were then just published. This was the author she held in her hand. We spent the evening in reading these poems.

This night was the commencement of an era, the events of which I do not wish minutely to pourtray. I lived only for one object. For six months I did not exchange more than four letters with my father. These were dated soon after my return to Edinburgh. I thought he had

forgotten me, or had not any thing particular to say. I had forgotten every one but the fascinating baroness.

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I was privately married to Lady L—— within four months after my return to Edinburgh. The connection was, for many reasons, studiously concealed ; but the marriage knot was indissolubly tied. From a detail of the transactions of this period I shrink almost with abhorrence. At the expiration of another month I received intelligence of my father's death.

I dropt the letter which contained this intelligence, and fell back on my seat,

from whence I sunk to the ground insensible. When I revived, the despair and agony of my countenance affected my wife to tears, who knew not my misfortune. She soon, however, discovered it, and joined my lamentations. My grief was such, that my reason and bodily strength were wholly overpowered, and I could only utter, in a low and broken voice, wild and unconnected complaints and supplications. Sometimes I called on my father's spirit, denounced myself as a murderer, and implored that he would return but for a moment to hear my justification and seal my forgiveness. I uttered my words in a low and trembling tone, almost unconscious of their meaning, and alive only to one idea, which

was to order a carriage and horses to be instantly prepared for my departure to Argyleshire. When I reflected, in all the bitterness of retrospection, that my haste was now unavailing,—that his last breath had been drawn in solitude, with no one whom he loved, or who could love him as I did, to sooth the pangs of dissolution, I burst, for the first time, into an agony of tears.

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CHAPTER III.

I WROTE to my wife that I would not quit Argyleshire. She replied with the most earnest solicitations for my return, and that I would give up my intention of living in the Highlands till the usual season for visiting the country. She concluded, however, by assenting to my proposal, provided I would at least return to Edinburgh to accompany her on the journey northwards. This appeared a reasonable request, and I did so. I went rapidly to Edinburgh; but of my

thoughts during the journey I have not any recollection, as I was in a state of insensibility and delirium.

My wife received me with a gaiety by which I was violently shocked. She even blamed the excessive grief on my countenance, and urged some of those common-place consolations which are always disgusting to one deeply afflicted. To me they were intolerable, and I begged her to be silent.

Her gaiety, however, continued, and seemed to be exerted with feverish force, as if she determined to resist the influence of depression herself, and to banish mine. She seemed to think this her duty, and

I was willing to call her designs benevolent. But my affliction was increased by her efforts to a degree of frenzy ; to which effect she seemed resolved to be insensible.

We arrived at my paternal residence without any remarkable occurrence. My wife's exaltation of spirits continued to irritate, depress, and alarm me to an excessive degree ; so that I frequently broke from her abruptly, and rushed into the deepest solitude, with feelings that seemed leading me to madness, and tempting me to suicide.

My unhappiness was increased by visits of ceremony and condolence from

various quarters, which seemed to excite my wife's cheerfulness, but to me were hateful.

All at once her gaiety seemed to have forsaken her. I was sensibly delighted by the change. Her eyes lost their lustre. I could again look on her with feelings of pleasure—far different from those she had once inspired. But I welcomed them as the harbinger of future peace; and sometimes was willing to hope that joy was yet in store for us. I tried to impute her recent behaviour, on which I could scarcely reflect without horror, to benevolence and affection. I thought she had now seen her mistake, and hastened to remedy her error.

At the same time I was severely shocked to think that such a disparity of disposition could ever have existed between us. But I tried to banish such reflections, by indulging the hopes which the change in her manners had inspired.

My happiness was but of short duration. My wife's depression of spirits increased more and more, until the powers of her reason seemed frequently to be suspended. Her countenance wore a fixed gloom, that never altered except when night came, at which season her melancholy always became more and more frightful to an observer ; and she seemed evidently struggling either with a diseased imagination, or with realities too horrible

for utterance. At length sleep had almost forsaken her ; and in her short and perturbed slumbers, she uttered words that were unaccountable and inexpressibly afflicting to me.

She had retired one evening with a preternatural expression of gloom on her countenance, which I beheld with horror, and of which I had in vain enquired the cause. I was weary, and had fallen into an imperfect slumber, when I was awoke by a kind of inarticulate murmur, that seemed rather the tones of some unearthly being than the voice of my wife. I anticipated her terror at this strange occurrence, and wished to clasp her in my arms, when to my surprise I found she

had quitted me. The same sounds were repeated. It was the moaning of one in distress. On drawing aside the curtain, I beheld Lady L—— standing in the middle of the apartment. A lamp hung from the ceiling, and shewed her countenance like that of the dead. Her eyes, indeed, were wide open and fixed, as if gazing stedfastly on some frightful object with preternatural intensesness. She was evidently in that state of peculiar suffering and horror which is characteristic of somnambulism. The dreams of one in this situation have all the vivid impression and horrible reality of supernatural visitations. She lifted one hand, as if imploringly, and murmured, “I know you!—But wherefore are you come?—

Leave me ! Thou art no longer of this world !"—She continued her incoherent discourse for some time, but I could only collect a few words. The rest was inarticulate. By degrees her raving turned wholly into struggling moans and faint shrieks. I saw the muscles of her countenance tremble, and her eyes vibrate convulsively. The tremor pervaded her frame, and I saw that she must awake and would fall. Horrorstruck, I started from the bed, and caught her in my arms. She uttered a wild and piercing shriek, and fainted. I laid her on the bed, and brought restoratives from a dressing-room. It was long ere she revived. I called on her by name. I conjured her by every tender and endearing epithet to

awake and look on me. At last her eyes opened ; but they rolled wildly, and she closed them again. I was now silent from anxiety. “ Who is it that touches me ? Is it you, Longueville ? Let me hear your voice—I have had a frightful dream.”

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Lady L—— was the widow of an Irish baron. Her expressions evidently related to events in her past life, of which I was ignorant. I dreaded the repetition of such scenes. I did not believe her agitation proceeded from guilt. I would not suffer myself to think so. I yet loved her with all the warmth of early affection. I shud-

dered to think of her situation. I entreated her next day to resume our residence in Edinburgh. I would have given worlds to restore to her a portion of that animation which had before disgusted me. Our departure was appointed to take place within a fortnight.

Words cannot paint the horrors of that interval. Her agitations did not continue ; but I beheld with inexpressible alarm and disgust the means my wife used to conquer them. Frequently I surprised her with a large phial of laudanum in her hands, which drug she swallowed in such quantities, that I could not but be apprehensive for her life ; and frequently

was persuaded that her intention was to commit suicide.

But oh the horror of witnessing the decay of those brilliant attractions by which my affection had been won ! Often in agony I gazed on her wasted form,—on her sunken eye,—and asked myself, was this indeed the self-same woman,—the seraph, by whose society I had been elevated to rapture,—by whose image even my solitary hours had been filled with exquisite enjoyment ?—Hopeless, yet imploringly, I looked on her inanimate countenance. Alas ! no glance of fire, no soothing smile, no gleam of intelligence and sympathy replied ! I thought on the days that were past,—on the joys that

were fled for ever. I compared former with present scenes, and my heart swelled with unutterable anguish.

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It was the day before that which was appointed for our departure. My wife entered the breakfast-room. Her look was appalling. The hand of death seemed on her. Her countenance was scarcely like that of the living. I started and shuddered. She had taken her place at the breakfast table. She drew forth a paper. It was a will, describing certain possessions in Ireland, and effects, &c. in the hands of an English banker, being her whole property ; which she desired should be

mine at her decease. I looked at the paper with a careless eye,—for my grief admitted not of increase. Her looks had sufficiently alarmed me. With an aspect of wildness and vacancy, and in a low and faltering tone, she asked, “Will you, Longueville, sign a deed of a similar kind towards me?” I no longer thought of our journey, or even hoped for her revival. I believed my wife was both irrecoverably insane, and that her premature death was inevitable. At such a moment, not to comply with what she requested, though it seemed only the vacant ravings of debility and despair, would have been the most unfeeling barbarity. I instantly took a similar sheet of paper, and executed a deed of the same kind. She viewed it with the

same vacancy of gaze, but appeared satisfied, and said it was a mutual pledge of our affection. I did not like her expressions. I was hurt that she should attach any consequence to subjects so unimportant ; and a chill passed over my frame.

Next morning, I was surprised to find that my wife had prepared for our journey. We had agreed to travel through the scenery of the English lakes, before fixing our residence again in Edinburgh. Indeed I had some thoughts of going to London ; but Lady L——— always objected to my proposals on that head.

It was now the middle of summer. The weather was intensely hot ; but a

pleasant breeze, that fanned our barouche on every eminence on the road, rendered the journey tolerably pleasant. My wife seemed roused by the diversity of the scenes, and the bustle of travelling had once more called up something like animation into her eyes. She was eager to reach her cottage on the banks of Winandermere. I pass over whatever incidents occurred in our progress ; for the mental depression under which I laboured had produced a constant fever on my spirits ; and I have preserved only the dim and unpleasant impressions left by a period of misery and pain. I have said that my wife seemed revived ; but, alas ! I could not easily conquer the gloom that had already fixed itself on my imagination, and

her perfect recovery seemed yet almost hopeless. The spell was broken which had inseparably connected with her image every thing that was rapturous and good, and virtuous and serene. Revolving these melancholy thoughts, I arrived on the banks of Winandermere.

It was now the beginning of August. The heavy rains, which often attend that season, had begun, and we were obliged to seek for entertainment in books for the first week after our arrival. My wife's English cottage resembled the Priory at Loch Ow. The surrounding scenery was exquisitely beautiful, and indeed sublime; yet perhaps, in awful grandeur and infinite variety, it scarcely equalled the Perth-

shire Highlands. The library was not extensive ; but it contained a competent collection of romances and poetry. Her extreme depression had disappeared. She was at least calm ; but she had the look of abstraction, and seldom spoke. Something evidently continued to prey on her mind. I began to admire the scenery from our windows, and to enter with some avidity on the pleasures of reading. I was grieved and irritated by my wife's apathy ; but I persisted in reading aloud to her, and in commenting on what we read, in hopes that time would restore the tone of her faculties. In these hopes I was disappointed. She had evidently lost her relish of literature. I grieved at the lamentable change. At length the weather clear-

ed up ; and the skies even already put on the tranquil and serene aspect of autumn. I thought Lady L—— would unquestionably recover, when my efforts to interest her were aided by the renovating influence of sunshine and magnificent scenery.

It was the seventh day after our arrival at the lakes. The morning rose in her most lovely aspect. Calmness and serenity reigned in the wooded vale, where stood our elegant residence. The ceaseless murmurs of the stream by which it is enlivened, seemed more than ever soothing. I had taken up a favourite volume. I promised myself a day of happiness. We were, I hoped, to divide the day between

books and rambling through the magnificent scenery. The delusion, alas ! did not continue long. At breakfast my wife was cheerful, and seemed in some degree to enter into the spirit of a literary conversation. I was myself deeply and seriously interested in it. Imagination and the purer passions were once more roused. The sweet influences of Nature's beauty once more predominated in my mind. I doubted not that my wife's plans for that day were similar to mine. I have already said that the delusion did not continue long. She rose and left the room, and in five minutes returned equipt for an excursion, and in a hurried manner wished me good morning. She intended, she said, to pass the day with a female friend,

who resided in our vicinity, and would not return till the hour of dinner. In the bitterness of anguish I almost wished she might never return !

Her voice, her look, had broken the spell which imagination had wrought. A chill shuddering sensation pervaded my frame ; and afterwards a suffocating sense of oppression fixed itself on my heart. I looked abroad on the scenery. It had lost every charm. Cold wintry clouds seemed resting on the landscape. The mountain air had lost its warmth and its fragrance. The redbreast ceased to sing—the torrent sounded mournfully to mine ear. I gnashed my teeth. I tore my hair, and rent the book I had been reading into fragments.

It was past—the reign of enchantment could never more be renewed. In despair I left the cottage, and, almost utterly insensible to all by which I was surrounded, wandered out along the road. I had walked, as I afterwards found, about a mile, when I heard a sound of laughing and music and merriment. It proceeded from the window of an ornamented residence. A figure was near the window : It was that of my wife. Her voice was remarkable. I distinguished her tones amid the rest of the revelry. If an assassin had plunged a poisoned dagger into my heart, it could scarcely have produced a more horrible pain. I rushed forward with the fury of a demon. I scarcely know how the day was spent ; but I returned not home till midnight.

Next morning my wife took not any notice of the preceding day's occurrences. She only told me that I might that day expect to meet some of the pleasantest of our neighbours, whom she had invited to dinner at our cottage. My heart was full of bitter reflection. Such an address at that moment was insupportable. It was the mockery of a fiend to a damned soul in agony. I rose from table—I rushed from the room—I returned instantly—I told her we must part, never to meet again. “If such is your desire,” she replied, “I have not any objection.” At these words I grasped her arm---I looked at her with the grin of a demoniac. The torments of hell were within me. A tear,—a sympathizing word would have

softened me. I should then perhaps have alluded to former times, and have said,

—— “ O, and is all forgot,—

And wilt thou rend our ancient bonds in sunder ?”

But—my wife shed not a tear, nor uttered a word of sympathy !

Expression wholly fails when I would here delineate my feelings.

I again left the house. I returned in a few hours. There was no company. Lady L——— was in tears. A gleam of satisfaction returned. I condemned my own violence. I resolved not to leave her. She wept almost incessantly. Her

former gloom seemed to have returned. Some days passed in this manner. The shock I had received wore off insensibly, and gave place to other feelings. I entreated her again to go into society, and even offered to accompany her! Nay, I almost insisted on it. At first she resisted; but a day or two afterwards assented to my renewed persuasions. I now wished to forget what had passed. I wished even to rush again into dissipation, and to forget myself.

In the populous neighbourhood in which we lived, society of all ranks was easily to be met with. Lady L——— had numerous acquaintances. At my instigation she gave frequent entertainments, and

accepted invitations in return. Our circles were often increased by travellers of rank and character, who received invitations to such parties. On one of these occasions my wife introduced me to Lord de Wynnestay, an Irish peer, as her intimate friend, and near neighbour at her Irish estates.

Lord de W. had spent much of his early life (for he was now turned of forty) abroad. He had considerable brilliance of manner; but he did not please me. I was dissatisfied at the familiarity which appeared between him and my wife. She talked to him incessantly. I had never seen her more animated. It resembled more the conversation of near relations than of ordinary acquaintances.

How was I astonished to find that Lord de W. had received an invitation to become an inmate in our house! Lady L——— described him as the dearest of her early friends, and one of the worthiest, as well as most accomplished of men.

But his visit did not continue long. He pursued his route to Scotland. We remained in Cumberland till the end of November.



CHAPTER IV.

WE returned to Edinburgh. My wife's renewed love of dissipation continued. Insensibly I imbibed a taste for artificial pleasures. I have now arrived at the commencement of another era, on which it is impossible for me to dwell without disgust.

Lord de Wynnestay was a constant attendant on our parties. In a short time I became reconciled to his presence. He was an active promoter of the dissipation

in which, alas ! I myself was too prone to indulge.

In consequence of a considerable loss at a gaming-table, I had occasion to write for a remittance to my steward in Argyleshire. How was I astonished to find that this man was already in advance to my wife ! I was obliged to procure the money from my law agents at Edinburgh. But the discovery caused to me a considerable shock ; for she had assured me that her own fortune was more than amply sufficient for all her expenditures. I despised the money ; but I was grieved at her apparent duplicity.

At intervals, when my course of dissi-

pation was checked, the bitter reflections by which I was assailed were to me inexpressibly dreadful. At such moments I seemed beset with the most horrible spectres, and I rushed into society again to forget myself.

Such a career could not continue long. It was arrested by a severe fit of illness ; and my physician, affirming that my disorders were chiefly nervous, recommended to me the quiet and seclusion of the country.

To my surprise and delight, for I yet loved her, my wife expressed her willingness to quit Edinburgh, and her desire to accompany me. We pursued our way

therefore to Argyleshire in the end of March.

I rejoiced at my escape. I even promised myself that I should yet again partake of happiness. In once more leaving the dull scenes of artificial life, I hoped to leave behind also care and guilt and sickness and melancholy remembrances, and once more to awake to a “new heaven and earth.” But I wished for some one to partake of my pleasures, and I looked in vain to Lady L——— for sympathy.

Notwithstanding this, my imagination continued elated. I dwelt once more on the pleasures of solitary meditation, and

the free and independent pursuits of a literary recluse. I recollected again the beautiful words of Thomson,—

“ I care not, Fortune, what you me deny :
You cannot rob me of free Nature’s grace ;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky !”—

My delusion was not of long duration. The morning after our arrival was the first of April. Though fatigued, my slumbers were unsound. I was awoke by the first note of the blackbird at my window. I hastened to retrace my well-known walks,—the scene of my early pleasures,—of enchantments brighter than those of Faëryland. They were gone !—they woke not again !—On my cold and feverish fancy rose only frightful spec-

tres and imagery of horror. The breezes blew ; and early as it was in the year, they came from the west. But the mild breezes only chilled me ! My constitution was broken ; my appetites were depraved ; the visions of my better days were gone for ever !

Under the influence of these impressions, how was I shocked and astonished to hear that my wife's friend, Lord de Wynnestay, was daily expected, with a numerous train of insipid fashionables, at my house !

They arrived !—My wife's character was evidently changed. Perpetual and harassing efforts at gaiety and merriment

prevailed around me. I had no one with whom I could sympathise. At this time I occasionally amused myself with writing letters to literary men ; and among others, I addressed a few lines to the author of a poetic fragment I have already introduced, whom I had met again and recognised in Edinburgh. To that letter I never received a reply ; and I heard soon afterwards that my unfortunate friend had sunk into an early grave,—affording a melancholy example how fearfully talents of no ordinary kind may be blended with, and often wholly overpowered by, morbid irritability, and its concomitant, debility and depression. I have since obtained some particulars of his very singular, and though short yet eventful life, which perhaps I

may be induced to communicate to the world, if at any time my own afflictions will give me leave.

I was now continually surrounded in my own house by every thing that could most effectually disgust, distract, and alienate the mind from all that was serene, virtuous, and praise-worthy. My hopes of happiness in my wife's society were blasted,—never to revive.

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Let those only whose imaginations have been sufficiently strong to form day-dreams of happiness equal to that of the blest in Elysium ; to make in idea that happiness

their own ; to deem the world a Paradise,—endeavour to form an idea of my anguish, my distraction, my despair, when all those fondly cherished visions were broken and dispersed ; when those bonds of affection, which I fondly thought would prove inviolable both in this world and the next, were rent in sunder ; when, instead of sensibility, benevolence, and literary ardour,—the love of virtue for its own sake, and kind and soothing conversation, I met only harshness of temper, and profligacy and insensibility.

Oh the horror of rending into fragments all the gaily adorned structures of a luxuriant imagination ! To feel them drop one by one away, like the withered

leaves on the bosom of an autumnal torrent, without even the faint and sickly hope of their revival ! To perceive their place supplied by darkness the most impenetrable,—by anguish and bitterness of heart the most acute,—by indignation, that wastes the vitals in unremitting fever !—I repeat, let such only attempt to imagine this, whose fancy has formed pictures beautiful as those by which mine was once illuminated.

Night, that brings comfort to the weary and the light of heart, was horrible to me. Night after night, week after week, my respiration was choked—I burned with unquenchable fever. Morn after morn dawned on me—I heard the cock

crow—I wandered forth—I heard the scream of the bittern. I looked up, and saw the wooded rocks red with the purple gleams of morning. I met the perfumed breeze, and saw the lakes gleaming to the rising sun ; and still my respiration was choked—my temples were not cooled—the torments of hell were within me.

It might be thought I could not have any greater struggles than these ; and there are who will express surprise or contempt that I should have feelings so acute as those which I have already described. But I have given only one portion of the picture. These formed only the first stage of my grief. While I could

walk abroad,—while I could view the influence of the morning, though I could not derive from it the pleasures of my youth, and though I carried with me the perpetual and restless wounds of bitter disappointment, yet I had my glimmerings of consolation. I suffered not from my own moral turpitude—I could behold the scenes without rapture, but not without admiration. I had other sufferings to sustain.

I walked one evening near the chapel in which my father's ashes were deposited. I was lost in thought, and I know not how it occurred, but I found myself intently gazing on the tomb. Insensibly a train of images, more horrid than any I had yet

known, took possession of my mind. The circumstances of his death first revived, and placed themselves vividly before my sight. I saw him wasted with anxiety, with fruitless hope, and unconquerable agitation,—the diseases of his mind far exceeding those of his body ; that anxiety caused by me, and by me only. He called on me in vain for consolation. In the dark midnight hour, when comfort deserted him, he called on me. His accents seemed to rise from the tomb. He summoned me by name, in a voice that even at this moment thrills through my heart with an indescribable sensation. The same scenes were again and again repeated, every time in more vivid colours than the former. I saw him on his death-bed. I

participated in his agony. I saw him turn his anguished eyes in vain to seek that son from whom he hoped to derive consolation. I saw him expire—I heard his parting groan, and watched his last convulsion. Insensibly a degree of grief, of darkness and despair, such as I had never before known, spread itself over my mind. I accused myself as his murderer. In the silence and gloom of the following night, hollow and supernatural voices haunted me, and accused me of ingratitude and of murder. Language is unequal to describe the horror of that night.

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To conquer my anxiety and my indig-

nation at my wife's conduct, I had recourse to books. This resource had never before failed to tranquillize my mind. It now failed completely. Instead of tranquillizing, it exasperated. What pleasure, what interest could I experience in contemplating the characters and incidents of the *Eneid*, the *Gierusalemme*, or the *Paradise Lost*, when every feeling was absorbed in my own misfortunes? I strove to conquer this dreadful malady. I remonstrated; I philosophized. I betook myself to the history of heroes, who were assailed not only by national misfortunes, but by domestic calamity. It was insufficient. I could not conquer the disease that preyed on my soul. In place of my former affection towards books and literary

research, I acquired a horror even at the idea of an hour of solitary study. I betook myself to the plains, the mountains, and the woods. I rushed from my dwelling in a frenzy of grief, to lose mental reflection in the violence of bodily motion.

* * *

At times I reasoned with my wife. I described to her with all the eloquence of passion, and in brilliant and glowing colours, the happiness of a life of virtue,—the acute misery as well as infamy of vice. I besought her, by all the ties of affection which had twined themselves round my own heart, to reflect on the consequences

of her present conduct,—on the pictures of happiness that might be realized by a contrary proceeding,—by the recollection of her duty to herself, as well as to her husband.

Sometimes she replied to me in hideous sarcasms,—sometimes in affected tones of assent and conciliation. After every conversation of this kind I regularly lost all hope, and my feelings were always exasperated to a degree of distress and bitter anxiety tenfold greater than before. I have not words to describe the horrid imagery that gradually took possession of my whole mind. I thought my wife was a fiend that was sent to destroy me.

Through the night I imagined that a thousand demons were with me. Sleep was wholly banished, and my health was rapidly undermined.

Those only who have felt a deeply-rooted and enthusiastic love of virtue, can sympathize with my emotions at living constantly in the society of one, to whom every virtuous emotion was a stranger ;—to whom the names of affection and sensibility were but empty sounds.

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One morning I happened to enter an apartment where my wife had been selecting some papers to be destroyed, from

a cabinet of which she always kept the key.

An old letter, which had been torn across, and had been evidently destined to the flames, attracted my attention by its hand-writing. It had slipped into a corner of the chimney, where it was partly concealed from observation, and had thus escaped the notice of my wife.

As soon as I had unfolded it, the truth instantly flashed on me. It was my father's hand, and was addressed to myself. His letters, by some strange and deeply-concerted scheme, had been intercepted during the period of my first intimacy with Lady L——. I no longer doubted

her guilt. The following is a transcript of such parts of the letter as remained undestroyed.

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“ Though I am afraid this letter will not be legible, I still make an effort to write, rather than employ the hand of another. Many days have now past since I wrote to you. It has been a melancholy interval to me. Within that short period I have lived an age of suffering.”

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“ When I had dispatched my letter, a chill shuddering seized my frame, and

my heart almost died to think on the long interval that must intervene before I could hear from you. During all that interval every night was sleepless, and every day was dark and cheerless. When it was morning I wished for night, and when it was night I sighed for the morning ; and when each had come in its tedious course, my only consolation was in the thought that your letter was a day nearer to me. When the day so long wished for arrived, I was disappointed. Oh ! you may have felt the pains of suspense and lengthened expectation ! But you felt them in health, when you had various resources, and your life was not ebbing like mine. You know not what it is to feel them in sickness,—to feel the

last solitary stronghold of earthly hope rent away from your feeble and feverish grasp,—to see your last remnant of pleasing illusion overspread with darkness and desolation. The day had come, and brought not your letter. Day after day since that time, I have said to myself I should yet hear from you. I look on the night with horror, and on the daylight with a dim and aching eye. Religion has lost its power over me. I am not yet disengaged from earthly ties. While I yet live I must heave the bitter sighs of expectation and disappointment. With you it rests to free my soul, and prepare it for eternity.”

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“ Oh what an age of anxiety have I to pass through ere the event of my present measures can be known ! Often in the dead of night I think I hear you. I start and look around, but all is solitude. Sometimes you seem to stand before me, and your features have the paleness of death. I am now weak enough to be superstitious ; and I think I have seen the vision that warns me of your dissolution ! But my eyes are affected by disease ; and I trust that such phantoms are only the consequences of delirium.”

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There are often some tempestuous days and nights in the month of April, “ while

yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.” It was on one of these dark and stormy evenings that I felt myself as it were irresistibly drawn towards the Chapel.

The skies were fearfully black and louring. I returned by a private path through the gardens. As I passed a summer-house which my wife had fitted up, the window was strongly illuminated, and I heard the sound of laughter and gaiety. It is impossible to express the shuddering chillness that was impelled through my whole frame at that sound. I would rather have heard the shriek of demons, and the yells of the damned. As I hurried past, I observed my wife and her female companion with Lord de

Wynnestaye, apparently engaged at a card-table. I went by a private stair-case to the library. A servant, who was passing the court at my entrance, followed me with lights. I turned over various books, as usual, without being able to read, and almost insensible of my own actions.

At length the midnight hour had passed, and I went to bed. In about two hours afterwards, I sank for a few minutes into a state not of sleep, but of stupor, in which my eyes were closed, which gave me a temporary relief. On awaking from my trance, I perceived clearly and distinctly a figure bending over the bed, as if looking on me sted-

fastly. At first I believed it was the continuance of a dream ; but I could not remember what I had dreamed. I then thought it might be a person come to awake me,—a message from my wife, or perhaps an assassin. As yet my eyes were half closed ; I perceived the figure, but not its lineaments. I opened them fully, and beheld the features of my father !—He was drest in a loose gown, with a close cap on his head, such as I had seen him wear in illness. All around him was darkness. I beheld his form alone in the void, like a portrait painted on a dark and opaque ground. I perceived even the precise colour and ornaments of his dress ; and beheld his eyes fixed stedfastly on mine, as if watching till I awoke.

I now thought of addressing him ; but an alarming and frightful change of his countenance, as if distorted by pain, shocked me to such a degree, that I instantly averted my sight. I shall never forget that dreadful expression. I kept mine eyes shut for a moment ; and then feeling as if I acted unpardonably in refusing to look on so dear a relative, I half unclosed them. The apparition was still at my side. I could not look again on its countenance ; but kept my sight fixed for, as I conjecture, nearly three minutes on his hands and arms, that were crossed on his breast. I closed them again, and covered my head with the clothes. After remaining thus for a few minutes, I looked up, and the spectre

had disappeared. All was complete and unvaried darkness ; but soon after, I heard the cock crow ; and in about an hour more, the faint grey light of morning was in my apartment.

I could not be deceived in this visitation. I was in the full possession of my faculties, unimpaired by fear ; though I felt shocked, awed, and alarmed, and my remorse acquired tenfold influence. I reasoned calmly on the improbability of supernatural visitations ; but here was no room left for doubt. I had neither dreamed nor been deceived by any machination of others,—nor was there a possibility for any ray of light to enter that side of my apartment, so as to pro-

duce fantastic forms, that fancy might shape into a human figure. I heard not the slightest sound, save only the whistling of the blast, and the beating of a heavy shower on the casement.

Next day the sun shone clear, and the west wind blew. I cannot convey an adequate idea of my sensations. The very sun-beams seemed to diffuse preternatural gloom, instead of cheerfulness. The fair face of nature was from thenceforward blotted from my wearied and aching sight. My frame burned with fever, and my heart was as if dead and withered within me. Never was the forcible expression of Milton so applicable. I “walked benighted under the mid-day

sun." I had held commerce with the dead, and now ceased to have any concern with the living and the cheerful.

The very scenes that used formerly to excite the greatest rapture, were now viewed, not merely with apathy, but with disgust and aversion, more intense than can be conceived.

At this hour, I am confident that there is a certain state of body and mind, in which spectral appearances become actually visible, and have all the horrible strength and influence of those visitations which have been seriously imputed to supernatural agency. The perceptions become insensible to *real* objects, and are,

as it were, turned inwards on the fictions of imagination, which acquires the power of banishing realities entirely from our sight, and placing its own creations vivid and distinct in their stead.

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Through the whole ensuing summer a succession of the most torturing images continued to haunt my imagination. My wife had become wholly estranged from my society. I believe several attempts were made on my life by Lord de Wynnestaye and others. One evening, at night-fall, a pistol was discharged so near to me by an invisible arm, that although I escaped unhurt, I was thoroughly convinced that my life had been aimed at.

There was a strange and superstitious obstinacy in my mind, which prevented me from suing for a divorce, as I might indeed have done on the strongest grounds.

At length the month of September arrived. The weather was unsettled and tempestuous. It was the midnight hour—loneliness, obscurity, and silence surrounded me, save when the rain fell heavily on the trees, and the hollow gust sounded at intervals through their branches. Save these mournful sounds, all was silence; save the dull ray of my own taper, all was utter darkness. In such a scene, the mind being deprived in great measure of the impulse of external occurrences, is forcibly led to find employmen

for itself in its own creations. Gradually I became surrounded with the most frightful spectres. I beheld again the visionary form of my father,—his countenance ghastly and sorrowful. I closed mine eyes involuntarily. When I looked again the spectre was gone. I thought of my own guilt,—of what *I might then have been*, if I had acted according to the dictates of reason and virtue. I now beheld a most horrible phantom approaching me. Dim and undefined, his visage was that of a corse, partly concealed by a shroud. One arm, bare and livid, bore an arrow, or javelin, barbed with fire. It approached—the dead features began to move, and grinned horribly. The fiery weapon was plunged into my heart.

All power of reason, of speech, and of motion, instantly forsook me. I felt as it were the unutterable pangs of dissolution. I fainted, and at my revival found myself by an expiring light, stretched on the floor, with an intolerable pain at my heart. I had strength only to crawl into bed, whence I did not expect ever to arise. I sunk into stupor. When I awoke, I found my strength revived,—but the horrible pain continued. It was insupportable.

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I could not remain for an instant in one place. I was seized with an irresistible desire for travelling. I left Argyleshire.

I thought, in all the bitterness of self-reproach, on what my early feelings had been on quitting the place of my nativity. A strange fancy seized me. I wished to try whether I could regain any portion of my former sensibilities, by exploring the wild and beautiful scenery of North Wales. I performed the whole journey on foot, taking every method to avoid meeting any one by whom I could be recognized. I arrived at the village of Arm * * * te on the 20th of October.

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NARRATIVE BY MR H——.

SUCH is the autobiography which, at my suggestion, was composed by Longueville. To most readers I am aware that it will appear repelling, and almost disgusting, from the lamentable degree of morbid weakness it so constantly betrays. But if the peculiar circumstances of my friend's life be considered, such weakness might not seem unpardonable. Indeed, I am of opinion that there were yet some secret sources of affliction which he never

revealed. I have too much reason to believe that though the feelings described in the preceding narrative are real, many incidents are suppressed ; and that in the detail of others there is more of imagination than sober reality. But after having proceeded thus far, no persuasions could induce him to add to, or alter the manuscript. He became disgusted with writing, and seemed more inclined to spend all his time in rambling through the most solitary places. Sometimes also he accepted my earnest invitations to visit me ; and generally at a late hour of the day would call at my house, and remain sometimes for an hour, at other times not above a few moments. I need not say how gladly I encouraged him to remain

with me ; and every day for a considerable time I thought I perceived symptoms of amendment, and returning powers of enjoyment both of books and of society.

It occasionally happened that at these interviews we were not alone ; and the attention of my friend was inevitably attracted by the beauty and accomplishments of another young and amiable guest of mine, to whose benevolent mind it afforded the purest pleasure to impart consolation and encouragement to the melancholy wanderer.

Matilda Arundel was the daughter of an English gentleman of rank and fortune, whose usual residence was in London,

and whose favourite villa and family seat were in Hampshire. But from a long course of extravagance, aided by the folly and ostentation of Lady Elizabeth Arundel, he became involved in such pecuniary difficulties, that, for the first time, he thought of retiring to a property dignified by a fine old castle which he possessed in the northern county of M——.

When in London, all the world rung with the fame of Mr Arundel's magnificent entertainments, and boundless expenditure.

To these entertainments the refined taste and genius of his daughter were taxed to contribute; for Lady Elizabeth

Arundel, though, from a deficiency of intellectual resources, she loved and encouraged the ostentation of her husband, was destitute of the requisite talents to shine in society, and of social benevolence to render her company agreeable to her guests. On Matilda, therefore, devolved the task of organizing the decorations of festivals in which her heart had no interest ; for in the midst of splendour and ostentatious magnificence, and of applauding and admiring multitudes, herself, the enchantress of the scene, Matilda was in SOLITUDE.

Her thoughts wandered far from every dazzling object in the surrounding scene. She seemed as if retreating within herself

to brood on secret stores of cherished reflection.

Her youth had been spent on the beautiful shores of the romantic river Arun. Left frequently in solitude by her fashionable parents, she had recourse to reading at first only as a protection from ennui. But it afterwards became a passion. Her family was ancient and noble. She had therefore the advantage of an old and well-selected library, stored chiefly with poetry and romance. Her reading had, in consequence, taken a singular turn ; for her father having no attachment to literature, *modern* publications were seldom added. It happened, however, accidentally, that, among other old tracts,

she had found the first edition of Thomson's " Winter ;" and luckily she discovered this beautiful poem at the very season which it describes,*—while the beech woods of Hampshire had all the pensive beauties of decay. By nature acutely sensible, Matilda could not fail to be enchanted with the correct delineations afforded by the poet. She felt that the beauty of every scene was enhanced by new associations; and this occurrence, which to many would appear trivial and

* This edition, which contained great part of what afterwards appeared under the title of " Autumn," has been republished, as a literary curiosity, by Mr Park, in the *Censura Literaria* of Sir S. E. Brydges.

uninteresting, rendered her irrecoverably a votary of Nature and the Muse.

Her mind, expanded by reading, and refined by that peculiar connection which takes place, in seclusion, between the intellectual and material world, became powerful and original ;—but, at the same time, exquisitely alive to every impression, she could not subdue the disgust produced by the artificial scenes of ordinary life, into which she was gradually more and more frequently introduced.

It was with satisfaction, therefore, that soon after a brilliant entertainment, on which even more than usual expense had been lavished, she heard her father one

morning declare his intention of leaving town for the season the following day.

Lady Elizabeth heard this proposal with undisguised ill humour and surprise. The fashionable season, she said, would not be over for six weeks to come. Not a soul was yet to be found in the country. Her complaints only extorted from her husband a peevish repetition of the same resolve.

It was with gladness and joy of heart that Matilda perceived the crowded streets and populous environs of the city gradually receding from her view. With exquisite pleasure she leaned out of the car-

riage, more fully to enjoy the warm yet pure breezes wafted over the leafy forest.

It was now early in the month of May. The fields had resumed their richest verdure. The west wind was exquisitely fragrant. The sun shone brightly. It was a day of inspiration !

Every rural object as she advanced on her journey was interesting to Matilda, and roused numberless images of recollected pleasure. Her imagination revelled in anticipated enjoyment.

When the well-known beech woods of her native domain once more came into view,—when she beheld the glories of

their waving canopy, and a partial sun-beam floated over the scene, her ecstasy became ungovernable and oppressive, and she burst into tears.

But why should I attempt, by any description of my own, to pourtray what is so much better conveyed in Matilda's letters, with some fragments of which I have been indulged by her friend and correspondent ?

FRAGMENT I.

MATILDA ARUNDEL *to* ISABELLA

WOODEFORDE.

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IT was, alas ! with a degree of ill humour and disappointment the most extreme, that, a few days after our last entertainment, of which I wrote to you some description, my mother heard that it was impossible to indulge any longer in the dissipation of the season ; and that it was unavoidably determined we

should remove immediately to my father's beautiful villa in Hampshire.

When we left London it was the middle of May. No language can adequately express my kindling rapture, as the traces of a city life were gradually left behind ; and I breathed at last the pure air of the country, and a thousand tender emotions and delightful remembrances took possession of my mind.

I was now about to retrace those delightful walks through the beech forests of the well-known region, which had inspired all the most fondly-cherished principles and habits of my mind,—where I had first perused the inspired pages of

those delightful bards on whom remembrance delights to dwell.

Never can I forget the rapture I experienced, when, leaning out of the carriage, I caught at length the balmy and unalloyed breezes, wafting perfume from the distant scenes of enchantment ! With what eagerness I hailed each rural sight, each rural sound !

As we drew nearer the place of our destination, such thoughts acquired new force and colouring, and a thousand new and romantic visions arose to my imagination.

At last I beheld the beautiful canopy

of the forest, arrayed in all the freshest tints of early verdure. Language utterly fails to convey an idea of my emotion. I burst into tears.

On the following day after our arrival, what scenes awaited me!--I was awoke by numberless choirs of birds, among whom the thrush and blackbird were heard pre-eminent. The dew yet glittered on the grass. All the air was filled with fragrance. I wandered forth on the banks of the river ———.

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Short-lived was Matilda's enjoyment of these faëry visions. The derangement

of Mr Arundel's affairs continued to increase, and gave rise to many perplexities and altercations with the weak-minded and unhappy Lady Elizabeth.

At last, in the beginning of autumn, it was resolved that, in order to be farther from his creditors, Mr Arundel should take an opportunity of visiting an estate which he possessed, but on which he had never resided, in North Wales.

Thunderstruck at this determination, his fashionable consort almost swooned from her emotion. But the will of her husband could not then be disputed.

There was a certain English peer of

large fortune, by whose marriage with Matilda, Lady Elizabeth looked forward to the re-establishment of her husband's affairs.

Lord Ashborne had often expressed a wish to visit Mr Arundel's northern estate, and Lady Elizabeth now looked forward with pleasing expectation to the time when the large property of this nobleman would in great measure be at her disposal.

It was with deep regret that Matilda prepared for this change. She fondly hung over every favourite flower—She wandered incessantly, the day before her departure, through her accustomed walks,

and sighed to think, that when every surrounding object had just become dearer to her than ever, she should be drawn from contemplating them to other scenes, illuminated by no faëry gleam, where the wandering streams were not, like the river Arun, the friends of her youth, and where no well-remembered rocks or trees could awake numberless associations.

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A mild autumnal morn ushered in the last day of Mr Arundel's northern journey. Through the peculiar and enchanting influence of a misty atmosphere, Matilda gazed with inexpressible pleasure on the beautiful and winding lakes, whose

waters reposed beneath the tranquil reign of autumn, and admired the fantastic forms of their wooded and rocky islands ; sometimes in a state of rude nature, and at others ornamented by the ruins of a fortress or monastery.

At every step of the horses, the scenes appeared to Matilda to grow more and more fascinating. But, alas ! with far different emotions did Lady Elizabeth contemplate every object. Her ill humour was almost insupportable. Not even the cold indifference of her husband could shield him from the contagion of her incessant complaints.

At last the venerable towers of ——

Castle, the property of Mr Arundel, came in view. For some time the road had wound along the margin of a beautiful lake of about five miles in extent, surrounded with precipices of grey rock, which rose out of the water.

The peculiar influence of an autumnal atmosphere,—of the lingering haze of the morning,—expanded even to terrific sublimity every object. The towers of the mouldering and extensive castle were seen to infinite advantage. They gradually emerged through the mist, like the creations of enchantment. The journey of the travellers was at length terminated, as they found themselves on a kind of platform considerably elevated on one side

of a wide and stupendous vale, through which flowed a rapid and beautiful river, taking its rise from the lake already mentioned. On the opposite side of the valley, fronting the castle, rose an enormous mountain, whose top was yet concealed by white vapours.—But I hasten to introduce another epistolary fragment, so much superior to any details of mine.

FRAGMENT II.

MATILDA ARUNDEL *to* ISABELLA

WOODEFORDE.

Yes, dear Isabella ! I know that to you I may write with freedom. I may unfold the feelings of my heart, with the confidence that if I meet not with perfect sympathy, I shall at least be heard with patience and kindness.

No sooner had I begun fully to enter into the pleasures of my native residence on the beloved banks of the Arun, than

my father's embarrassments forced us to
leave it ——— * * * *

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But let me banish these dull details, and, if possible, all unpleasant recollections from my mind, and dwell on what is soothing and interesting in our present situation. It is impossible for any words adequately to convey to you an idea of the savage grandeur by which I am surrounded, or of my feelings during the latter part of my journey towards this habitation, as the scenes gradually opened themselves on my astonished view, and assumed every hour a wilder and a wilder grace.

Even now while I write, could I portray the magnificence and solemnity that every where surround me, I could not but excite even your imagination, which, as you justly observe, is not so fervent as mine. Alas ! I am but too often inclined to envy your tranquillity, and to wish that it were possible to be less tremblingly alive than I am to every external impression. How often is the dream of happiness that I have fondly cherished broken in an instant into fragments !— It was but just now that I was preparing to delineate, if possible, a picture which I thought you could not fail to admire, that my mother entered the room. Oh Isabella ! you will hardly believe the dreadful effects that this change in our mode

of life has effected in her disposition ! Her temper seems wholly destroyed. The most deplorable ennui has taken possession of her mind. Yet how can it be otherwise ? She has no taste for the wild grandeur by which we are surrounded. She has no taste for simple and independent enjoyments. Her conduct is alarming and frightful to me. My heart dies within me at the tone of her voice. I shudder for the probable consequences of recent events ; and their influence, alas ! is already too perceptible.

My chamber is in the southern tower of a large and venerable old castle, through whose long and narrow passages, and spacious chambers of singular construc-

tion, you would almost be afraid to wander,—so singular are the scenes which it presents, and so intricate its various turnings and windings.

While I write, the stillness of an autumn day reigns over the stupendous mountains and boundless forests. This castle is situated on a sort of platform, somewhat elevated on one side of a deep and most extensive valley, every where covered with wild wood, whose variegated canopy now exhibits the most exquisite and enchanting hues. A large and most rapid river runs through the deep and rugged ravine.

Before mine eyes at this moment rises

the stupendous and precipitous mountain which forms the uninhabited side of the valley. At a distance there is an opening, being the entrance into the vale ; through which are seen the rich and varied treasures of the Lowland landscape, but at a distance too remote for particular objects to be accurately described.

Behind me, there is a gleam visible of a magnificent lake, from which the rapid river already mentioned takes its rise. The serenity of autumn reigns over the scenes. A soothing odour fills my apartment, from the fading woods and the luxuriant heath, that yet retains its lingering flowers. The redbreast carols on the boughs of a venerable beech-tree at

my window. Afar, from the viewless cliffs of the mountain, is heard the solitary cry of the falcon deepening the stillness and solemnity of these inaccessible precipices. It is a lovely and sublime scene. Would that you were present to partake of it !

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Never did I before experience, in its full extent, that desolation of the heart in which there is no spot of verdure,—no resting place, no support to which the mind may cling for consolation. My soul is torn by emotions the most powerful, and I have no one to share them with me. It is a waste of life !

What then must be the lot of a genius such as Beattie has pourtrayed in the Minstrel, brought up from infancy in unbroken seclusion, or surrounded only by uncongenial beings whose presence constitutes the worst kind of solitude? How many glorious and inspired bards may have been lost to the world in consequence of such inauspicious nurture!

Very frequently I try to write; but alas! this is my *only* resource; and the frequency of my application to it is the reason why it never can sooth me. To you indeed I always write with pleasure; but I own I feel I require something more to tranquillize my perturbed fancy! The literary effusions to which you en-

courage me would be delightful, if it were not that from constant repetition the employment halts on my perceptions, and *that* becomes laborious which was intended only for amusement.

* * *

Oh Isabella ! you have never experienced, nor can you even imagine, what I now suffer !—You have never known that situation in which the mind, deprived of every resource, preys on itself, and the heart seems consumed by its own perpetual and exhausting emotion ! To me the fair face of Nature has almost become a “ universal blank.”

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Soon after the commencement of my acquaintance with Longueville, another long track of wintry desolation usurped the reign of mild and warm skies, picturesque vapours, and partial gleams of sunshine.

The birds again forgot to sing; the leaves were withered as before. The landscape was deprived of half its beauty.

Even then there were times when I almost flattered myself that the mind and frame of Longueville were recovering their tone. He had indeed almost lost

his enjoyment of rural scenery. His mornings were spent almost entirely in the apartment fronting the south, and opening into a garden where he delighted to bask in the feeble sunshine, and to watch every cheering note, that, though seldom, was occasionally trilled by the redbreast.

There too, when the wind was up amid the trees, and the air was filled with leaves, he loved to contemplate the desolation of Nature, and to hear the hollow blast moaning around.

But these were not the auspicious hours,—these were not the contemplations by which I thought it probable his

health might be restored. The deepest depression then weighed on his mind. He believed himself to be haunted by horrible demons, which preyed on his vitals, and agitated him to phrensy.

It was chiefly when his attention was engrossed by some noble and interesting work, especially by some undisguised delineation of mental emotions, the confessions of some wonderful mind, such as that of Tasso or Cowper or Alfieri, when he was at once consoled by their sympathy and elevated by their genius, that he seemed utterly to lose recollection of himself and his woes. Then he seemed exalted for a space to a new order of existence. He lived in the pure world of

intellect. His soul seemed disengaged from the load of earthly frailty and misery. But, alas ! such delightful evidences of virtue and energy were short and far between.

For some weeks after his first arrival, illiterate and stupid neighbours, induced partly by covert malignity and hatred, but the greater number by prying curiosity and mistaken civility and politeness, instead of merely leaving their names, forced their way into his retirement, and intruded on the quiet and delightful reverie of his morning hours. Then the golden chain of thought, that, in a mind and frame so morbidly sensitive as those of my friend, was frail as the gossamer,

that a breath can destroy, was broke in sunder. A wearisome waste of slow and melancholy hours of pain and feverish depression was to be traversed, ere the same soothing languor and independent bliss and beautiful illusions could be renewed.

For my part, as from the first I knew the disposition of my friend,—as I was perfectly aware of his habits and his maladies, I took care never to intrude on his hours of meditation. I used to write a note to ask if I might call on him at a particular hour, which I named ; and if I obtained permission, which used to be conveyed in the monosyllable “ Yes,” written with a pencil, I waited on him at

the precise time appointed. Then, if he seemed silent and abstracted, I instantly withdrew ; if animated and desirous of conversation, I gladly remained. It was by conforming to his habits, which I perfectly understood ; by sympathizing with his sufferings, without verbal professions of sympathy, that I secured and perpetuated his regard and confidence.

What I have stated of the mischievous consequences of unexpected interruption, will not appear strange to such individuals as have been accustomed to observe the habits of literary men. My friend at last persuaded the servants by whom he was attended to make use of the words “ not at home.”

Such interruptions were severe trials of Longueville's patience. Their effects were the more irritating, because they were accompanied by a sense of injustice, and by a certain degree of self-reproach. He blamed himself for not having found out some spot so sequestered, that he might no longer be disturbed in the quiet exercise of the humble talents that remained to him, and in his devout admiration of the sublime scenery of Nature.

Thus, when the fine weather returned, and Autumn appeared in her most lovely hues,—when the air was filled with fragrance, and the sun shone through a haze which imparted warmth and colour to his light,—when the mighty forests were be-

held in their most magnificent attire, and the winds blew from the south, soft and balmy,—he was so feeble and so feverish, and the tone of his whole system seemed so much deranged, that he was scarcely able to enjoy them. Yet even then, it appears from his papers that he watched with lively though chastised interest the exquisite scenery of each autumnal morning. When, in the beautiful language of “Triermain,”

“The sun was struggling with frost-fog grey,
That like a silvery crape was spread
Around Helvellyn’s distant head,”

he delighted to inhale the early fragrance, and exulted to see the picture realized ;

and, above all, he recollected the enchanting scenes in “Mary de Clifford,” and in Woodville found a character, however dissimilar in many respects, yet congenial, in melancholy and love of Nature’s beauty, to his own.

Then when the day advanced, and the south winds began to rise on high, and the mist-wreaths dissolved from the view, he pursued his way amid the woods, while the foliage, blighted by the night frost, fell in rustling showers around him.

If any thing could have restored Longueville, it would have been the benevolent attentions of Matilda ; and though I frequently had apprehensions that her

feelings might be too much interested for her own peace of mind, yet I could not forbid those interviews, on which the success of my endeavours for his recovery all depended.

Frequently he came to my house too much depressed, or too abstracted, for conversation, and would either take leave in a few moments, or walk restlessly through the room, till, perhaps, some remark of Matilda would arrest his attention; and at last, by degrees, his mind would seem to be gradually moulded into that happy frame which gave rise to animated conversation; enjoyment of which at other times it seemed impossible he could ever be susceptible,

Various methods were adopted to engage his attention. Matilda transcribed, in her beautiful hand-writing, passages from his favourite authors, which he perused with attention, and highly valued. I gave him books which were marked with her marginal notices of approbation, and we tried to engage him in a playful literary correspondence, in which all attempts at fine writing, or elegance and correctness, were to be entirely laid aside; and, at the same time, I used to support the theory, that modern poetry was too artificial and affected to admit the expression of real feelings, and recommended to him to imitate the rudenesses and freedom of Spenser and other old writers.

Every day for some time I continued to flatter myself with hopes of his amendment. But it seemed as if, amid all the opportunities that were afforded him for enjoyment, dark clouds inevitably returned and settled on his brow.

He seemed to be labouring under suppressed emotions, which, determined not to reveal, he endeavoured to veil by an appearance of levity and indifference. I thought sometimes he even sedulously shunned to meet Matilda. He did not dare to meet her eyes with an answering glance; and her voice seemed to thrill his frame with emotions too powerful.

I grieved at these changes, and endea-

voured to combat them by constant allusions to literary subjects. I thought Longueville perceived and acquiesced in my design, and himself endeavoured to be engaged in the literary employments which I recommended ; but a circumstance soon occurred which caused to me most serious disappointment and regret.

It unfortunately happened that Longueville, who was fond of music, had been teized by repeated solicitations to accept an invitation from Mrs P—— to one of her concerts.

It had at last crept abroad that he was a man of family and fortune. He was therefore an object of curiosity and inte-

terest to Mrs P——; and she spared no pains to convince him of her wish to obtain his acquaintance and confidence.

“It was,” she said, “all so lonesome for a young gentleman to live at such a frightful old place as Wythorpe manor-house.” And she “could not think how he could pass so much of his time alone there.”

“La ! mamma,” said one of her daughters, “how can you say so ? Perhaps Mr Fitzalbyn is fond of romantic seclusion.”

“There may be other reasons for retirement besides love of romantic seclu-

sion," observed Sir ——— with a sneer.

"For my part," continued Mrs P——, "if I were in Mr Fitzalbyn's situation, I should not like to be for a moment alone there. I should go abroad every where, and accept every lady's invitation."

"But, consider your conversational powers, madam," observed Longueville. "Every one is not gifted with the same talents for society."

"Oh! for that matter," said Mrs P——, "I am sure it is only the want of company that makes you so melancholy like; and if you were to try, I am

sure you would learn to converse just as well as any body. Besides, you should try what music and dancing would do.—There's my Alicia, now!—Tell Mr Fitzalbyn, Alicia, what a good remedy a Scotch reel is for low spirits; and then cheerful society is" ——

“No doubt, madam,” said Longueville, “the society of those who are so eminently gifted with good sense, refinement, and delicacy and liveliness and musical powers, must be the best of remedies.” Mrs P—— could not suppress an exulting laugh at this remark, which she immediately appropriated as a compliment to her own wisdom, and the attractions of her numerous daughters.

It was not without much difficulty that this lady succeeded in obtaining the company of Longueville.

When, however, he did accept an invitation to one of her concerts, he became very soon so thoroughly disgusted with the vulgarity and coarseness of the mother, and the forward loquacity of the daughters, who told him that dancing was good for him,—that the country was become the most dismallest place, now when the leaves were changing colour and falling—(which Mrs P——— said always made even her melancholy) that Walter Scott was the most beautifullest of poets, &c. &c. ;—that, after increasing the ridiculous in every remark by his af-

fectured assents and heightening touches, his patience was at last worn out, and he started up, and abruptly departed, while Miss Sophia Wilhelmina was beginning a grand performance on the harpsichord, accompanied with her voice, in which she was thought to display her greatest powers.

As the offence was never apologized for, it was never forgiven. Not a method was left untried to circulate the blackest calumnies against the character of Longueville. Amongst other accusations, occasional meetings with Matilda were not unnoticed. He had even been seen to walk with her alone in the park.

He was stigmatized as a fortune-hunter, an impostor, a criminal, and an outcast !

I am not sure whether I have already mentioned that Matilda was at present his uncle's guest at his residence in the romantic neighbourhood of A——. But though she had thus escaped for some time the direful dominion of her mother, it could not be long before the weak mind of Lady Elizabeth Arundel was filled with the numerous reports circulated with such industry by Mrs P——.

The first intimation we received of this circumstance having taken place, was on a lovely day in autumn, when in a tone of mind and frame the nearest to poetic

inspiration and celestial beatitude, Longueville and Matilda were talking in tones of tremulous delight on the beauties of a favourite romance, in which the descriptions of autumnal beauty corresponded in every respect with the enchantments by which they were actually surrounded.

In the midst of this delightful employment, the barouche and four of Lady Elizabeth Arundel appeared at the door. A deadly paleness overspread the beautiful countenance of Matilda; and in an instant, before Longueville was awake by the change of her voice and manner from his enchanting reverie, an apparition and a voice were in the apartment, which in-

deed were sufficient to blight and to overpower every gleam of poetic delusion.

With the determined air and malignant exultation of a demon, and the ridiculous self-importance which always accompanies the exertions of the ignorant and weak-minded, she ordered Matilda to follow her out of the room, darted the look of a fiend at Longueville, and disappeared with her pale and trembling victim.

The discordant and horrible voice,—the look, the air, the action,—its consequences,—the solitude and desolation succeeding to a delightful reverie,—had an effect upon my friend, which, though he was quite silent, I perceived had destroy

ed in an instant all the advantages that had been gained, and rendered him farther from convalescence than ever.

I shall not attempt to pourtray my own vexation and regret. I remember it was a lovely evening. The setting sun illumined the now fast-fading glories of the woods with a kindred colouring to their own. A gentle breeze rustled among the leaves, that occasionally fell on the passenger, and occasionally reminded him how soon the reign of autumn would now pass away.

But the two animated and sensitive beings, that were so lately enjoying these interesting charms of Nature, were now,

by the influence of calumny, stupidity, and malignant oppression, rendered cold and dead to the scenes that were around them.

Next day the morning arose in her most sombre dress. A south-east wind roared furiously amid the woods, and, filling the air with leaves, seemed to spread desolation and destruction around.

Longueville was somewhat soothed by the sympathy of Nature, and towards the close of day went abroad for a long ramble into the woods.

At seven o'clock I went to keep a dinner engagement at Mr Arundel's. I

had reason to fear that Matilda had suffered severely from her mother's violence ; for at dinner she did not appear.

There were, as usual, a large party. In the course of conversation, I learned that Matilda, Lady Elizabeth, and Lady Dashmore, had that day been providentially rescued from extreme danger by the timely interposition of my friend. Lady Diana was the driver of the barouche, in which carriage the ladies had followed the hounds. . The horses, who from the commencement were rendered extremely irritable by the falling leaves and loud wind, had taken fright, and were on the verge of a precipice, when

they were checked by the arm of Longueville.

To this narrative succeeded the ill-timed endeavours of Mrs P—— and her abettors to blacken the character of Fitzalbyn. These, however, were now so extremely mal-apropos, that the manifestation of her own malignity was the only effect of Mrs P——'s insinuations ; and they would have desisted in extreme mortification, had it not been for the assistance of Sir —— ———.

“ One day,” said the enlightened Baronet, “ when I had been out shooting, I happened to pass by the old manor-house of Wythorpe, and there I found

the gentleman whom we were talking of standing at the gate of a poultry-house ; and as I chanced to cast an eye on the door, which was of wire net-work, I spied a hare starting about inside. So, says I, Good morning to you, sir—Fine hunting day, sir !—Yes, sir, says he, a fine mild southerly wind !—Now I thought this a little queer ; for to be sure the wind blew directly from the north, cold as December, and he was muffled to the eyes in a great coat. So I said, Fine sporting country, sir ! I presume you are a great admirer of field-sports ?—Certainly, sir, says he ; my chief amusement consists in bloodshed, wounds, and butchery !—So I began to think the man was crazed.”

“ And with great reason you thought so, sir !” observed Mrs P——.

“ But I ventured,” continued the Baronet, “ to risk another question. Sir, says I, may I take the liberty to ask what time you mean to sport the hare which I see you have cribbed yonder in the poultry-yard ? You’ll give her another chance for her life, no doubt ?—Yes, sir, says he, the fairest in the world ; I shall give her her liberty this very night—about twelve o’clock.—The devil you will ! says I ; that’s rather an uncommon hour for such amusements.—And just at that moment, as I happened to turn my head, he disappeared, without condescending to say another word.”

“ I suppose, sir,” lisped Miss ——, a poetess, “ the gentleman, like Cowper, is fond of rearing tame hares ; and perhaps, not finding this one so tractable as he wished, really intended to set the poor animal at liberty, and not to sport it, as you supposed.”

“ ’Pon my vard, ma’am,” said another guest, “ I dare say you are very right ; for that fellow Cowper was as mad as a March hare himself, upon my soul !”

“ And then, think of his expressions about field-sports,” said Sir ——, reverting to Longueville ; “ curse me if I don’t believe the fellow was trying to quiz me !”

“ If the present subject of conversation is the gentleman who at present possesses Wythorpe manor-house,” said a young man, who had hitherto been silent, “ I can assure the company that he is a man of fortune, family, and singular abilities. He has indeed been imprudent and unfortunate. But the opprobrium which has been cast on his character by some malignant individuals in this corner,” (here Mrs P—— tossed and bridled,) “ and the imputations of insanity, are alike utterly unfounded.”

I felt most sincere delight at this interposition ; for as I am myself, in consequence of literary habits, viewed with suspicion in the neighbourhood, my de-

fence might have been considered less important, than that of the gentleman who now spoke.

The consequence of all this was a pressing invitation from Mr Arundel (who called on Longueville,) to join the party at —— Castle.

It was with much difficulty that I prevailed on him to send a note, to say that he would dine there the following day.

During the morning of that day, as I perceive from her letters, Matilda had pursued her accustomed walks. It was in one of those awful moods of autumn, when the skies are dark and heavy, when

the south winds blow, and soothing odours arise from the fading forest. On her return at a late hour, it was with the greatest surprise that she met Longueville on his way to the castle.

After the first faint exclamations at the unexpectedness of the meeting, not a word was uttered. To have spoken would have dissolved the spells of enchantment. In a silent and sympathetic ecstasy they advanced. The wild influence of the heavy clouds seemed to each more and more enchanting. The leaves exhaled more exquisite fragrance ; and, in a delicious trance of pleasure, they entered the castle. The large old drawing-room was illumed by the light of a blazing wood fire, which

diffused a picturesque influence amid the Gothic furniture, the paintings and trophies of the chace ; and their poetic illusions might have continued, had it not been for the coarse jests of the Scotchman ; the overbearing self-conceit and puppyism of the peer ; the disgusting manner of Sir ——— and Lady Diana, who talked of the number of birds they had killed, the feats of their horses, &c. ; and the mawkish sentimentality of the poetess.

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Soon after, an event occurred most unexpectedly, which caused to me the greatest surprise and regret. Longueville sud-

denly, and without the slightest previous intimation of his intention, departed from H——. No one knew the cause of his disappearance. No one could conjecture whither he had betaken himself.

The consequences of this event were deplorable. Its effect on the situation of Matilda, though her real feelings were concealed, was most alarming.

In a hurried note, in which nothing was said of his new intentions, Longueville committed to me the charge of his books and papers. I have said that I believed there existed some secret cause for his extreme depression, which he had never revealed. The following unconnect-

ed fragment seems to strengthen this conjecture.

MORN awoke; but for me her influence was no longer the same. Cold chilling winds seemed to desolate the groves. Dark clouds fell upon the scene. The autumnal tints had lost their beauty. My cherished principles and feelings of action had all departed.

Preparations were continued for the fete. The rooms were prepared for a magnificent illumination; and the bright old furniture was stripped of its coverings.

I persevered through the day in my walks. They were my resource alike in joy and in sorrow. But the landscape had lost its hues. I sought not my usual path, but hurried through the woods into the wildest and most unfrequented part of the boundless heath.

But the heath was at a far distance. I had to walk miles through the wood. I passed through the beautiful groves of beech and chesnut and ash trees near the castle. I passed through the wild and extensive track of copsewood. I came at length into dark forests of pine trees. The ground gradually grew more sterile. There were large tracks of purple heath amid the forest, where no tree had found

fit nourishment. I came at length into the open and desolate scene, where not a vestige of human habitation was to be traced, save one solitary old tower, where never any one was seen through the day ; yet it was said to be the abode of a maniac.

I looked around. As far as the eye could reach, all was solitude. I resigned myself to contemplation. My thoughts flowed on in their own uninterrupted channel. I talked aloud with freedom. There was none to listen.

It was a lovely day. The sun diffused the tranquil splendours of autumn. A bluish haze was spread over the scene.

All was deeply still. Not a breeze moved the canna's hoary head in the marsh. "Oh beautiful world," said I, "why is there not a race of beings, pure and elevated and wise, capable of enjoying your treasures?—But there are—there must be in the world beings capable of elevated impulses"——I was proceeding, when, at about two hundred yards distance, a form suddenly appeared walking on the heath!—Whence could he have come? It seemed the work of enchantment. I gazed on him in silence—the silence of astonishment. I was about to follow him as he receded, when suddenly he seemed to sink into the earth!

I walked hastily on. I arrived at the

spot where he had disappeared. Not a vestige of the recent presence of any one appeared. All was lonely. There was not a bush which could conceal a human form. There could be no deception. What I had seen must either be supernatural, or the mere creation of my own fancy.

A thousand confused ideas arose in my mind. I endeavoured to connect together the form I had now seen with the mysterious appearance of the preceding night. I endeavoured to connect both with the story of the maniac. But I could draw no satisfactory conclusions.

I recollected a poem which described

the sufferings of a maniac. I endeavoured to divert my attention from a subject which meditation seemed only to render more obscure, by composing the following verses.

THE MANIAC.

Whence comes that wither'd form ? Perchance
 When o'er the scene mine eye did glance,
 Prostrate upon the heath he lay :—
 Of Pain and Woe he seems the prey.
 His tatter'd garb betrays distress ;
 His looks are looks of wretchedness :
 But oh his features ! now my sight
 Has caught them, could I judge aright
 If I should deem such looks were given
 To aught belongs to earth or heaven ?

Some ghost it is, by magic spell
 Call'd from the realms of pain in hell !
 No visage this of living man !
 An animated corse ! so wan
 And shrunk his cheek ; so worn away
 The faintest trace of passion's sway !

* * *

“ Ay ! thou shalt know
 The fearful story of my woe.”

* * *

“ Thou see'st yon sun, yon sky serene ;
 Beneath thou mark'st this earthly scene ;
 Perchance thine heart with transport swells !
 I see it in thine eye, that dwells,
 With joy and grief alternately,
 On the fair landscape and on me.

I mark them too ! the cloudless sun,
 And the fair scene he shines upon ;
 But me they soothe not ;—when I try
 To heave the sob of ecstasy,
 And breathe the prayer of gratitude,
 And rise into a heavenly mood,
 A rush of scorching fire consumes
 My shrinking frame ; no sun illumines
 The mountain scene ;—the sweetest bower
 Could not exclude that blasting power.

“ Perchance when mid the forest wild
 Thou hast thine autumn day beguiled,
 Sweet fellowship has charm’d thy way,
 And thou hast felt relieved to say,
 How lovely is the landscape gay !
 And hear the low sympathetic tone
 Of rapture answering to thine own.—
 If I would turn, and strive to tell
 The feelings that my bosom swell,

(And never yet did mortal ear
 But thine alone the story hear !)
 O then would meet my blasted sight
 A form that would the bravest knight
 That ever wielded brand affright !
 His bones are black ; for many a day
 And night in charnel vault they lay.
 His look, his voice I may not tell,—
 I dare not on such terrors dwell.

“ Perchance when the autumnal day
 Is done, and on the mountain grey
 The twilight tints have died away,
 Thou lovest around the social board,
 With rich repast abundant stored,
 To meet the cheerful band, who know
 By converse sweet to banish woe,
 And elevate the soul on high
 To virtuous hope and ecstasy ;—
 Then wakes my keenest agony !

The fiend, beneath whose horrid sway
My youthful hopes all died away,
Begins his fiercest, direst reign ;
And ere the morn hath dawn'd again,
And found me on the heath alone,
An age of torment I have known !”

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The evening sun set in purple brilliance. I watched its tints from the window. A western breeze came cool and fragrant from the woods.

Musicians, and tradesmen of various classes, produced a discordant bustle. A message was brought to Father —— to attend to their wants. I gladly left the castle, and wandered abroad.

The moon rose in full-orbed majesty. With a fearful interest, which I could not repress, I retraced my walk of the former night. All my faculties were absorbed in fearful expectation. I hurried along the path. The curfew-bell had rung. I looked for the mysterious form on the spot where he had formerly appeared.

Suddenly I heard a slight rustling. I turned. He stood at my side ! I was in the presence of the dead ! I spoke not. I dared not utter a word of enquiry.

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At this moment a burst of music rose from the castle. The rattle of carriages was borne on the breezes. The stranger discontinued his narrative. Breathless, I waited for its recommencement. Suddenly an equipage, with flambeaux and servants on horseback, rounded a corner of the road. I looked for an instant on this cause of interruption, and in that instant the stranger disappeared !

In vain I looked for him. Once I thought I perceived a dark form gliding amid the trees ; but it was but for a moment. I knew that my absence from the castle would be blamed, and, in a state of inexpressible anxiety, I returned thither.

The glittering pomp and artifice of the succeeding scenes had a powerful effect on my imagination. But for the incidents immediately preceding, I should have been enraptured. As it was, I seemed in great measure absent to what was passing around me. Yet I was powerfully affected by the liveliness of the scene, and cheering notes of the music. For a space I seemed in Faëryland. But on the details of such artificial pleasures I never could dwell with patience. I proceed therefore to other circumstances.

As the hour of terròr approached, I perceived an increasing shade of anxiety on my father's countenance. Occasion-

ally he seemed perfectly abstracted from all that passed around him, and his eye rolled, as if in search of some awful object. Then his presence of mind suddenly returned, and by an effort he recalled himself from wandering.

As the hour drew nearer and nearer, these efforts were exerted with a feverish force. Twelve o'clock struck. The goblet trembled in his hand. A stranger was in the apartment. He took off his mask, as if for refreshment. He stood opposite to my father. He gazed on him. My father looked on the stranger. The cup dropped from his hand. He uttered a cry of horror. All the company started and crowded round him. Then they

looked around for the terrific stranger ;
but he was gone ! They enquired of the
attendants ; but no one had perceived his
exit or his entrance.

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I returned to the company. I was in
society, but not in that of human beings !
Had I been serenaded by all the musi-
cians of the earth, and environed by all
the *houris* of a Mahometan paradise, I
should yet have been in company only
with demons and phantoms of horror !

A strange unearthly light seemed

thrown over the scenes. Around me were living beings, whirling in the giddy dance, or joined in lively conversation,—every countenance beaming with animated intelligence and joy.

With such beings I had never been of the same species ; but now not a trace of resemblance, not one sympathetic feeling, seemed to remain. I was like a spectre drawn from the tomb of his rest into scenes of life and light and brilliance, in which he had no longer any interest.

I remember I was not so far abstracted but that I could perceive the unequivocal proof that such feelings were founded on reality.

As I approached, every eye that chanced to be turned on my countenance instantly abated of its light. Cheeks that glowed with delight instantly faded into paleness. Gay radiant forms seemed to wither at my approach ; and I, who was born with a heart to expand with benevolence, and swell with the luxury of giving and receiving social bliss, seemed converted into a demon, by whose presence innocence and loveliness were blasted ; and the beautiful enchantments of the surrounding scenes all melted away.

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THERE are some other fragments among Longueville's papers, which appear to me not uninteresting. The following seems to have been written in a fit of despondency in the autumn which he spent at Wythorpe.

How mild, how soothing, how exquisitely fragrant the air ! How gloriously beautiful the hues of the forest, where ever and anon, at intervals, a tree rises in beauty pre-eminent over the rest, and unfolding masses of colouring which the painter delights to copy ! O lovely and inspiring scenes ! Leaves which give

out your musky fragrance to the air !
Deep stillness, congenial to meditation !
Hollow murmurs, which rise at a far distance, where bursts the river on the ocean's bed ! How seldom is it that MAN is sufficiently disengaged from sorrow to luxuriate in your pure and innocent delights !

How fervently,—how vainly do I wish it were in my power to recall a few years of my life ! How different would now be my objects and my employments !

While feebly I write, the hand of death is on me. I have not time to collect my thoughts. My pen is hurried by the urgency of that power, against whom there

is no resistance. Thus I cannot follow out any train of thought. Excuse therefore my broken and abrupt rambles from subject to subject.

Frequently I am abstracted wholly from the scenes that are actually around me.

Sometimes I imagine myself in the scenes of my infancy and youth.

Then I say to myself, in this very spot, how many glorious visions have been framed, that have vanished like the morning cloud!—Autumn is never more lovely than in the scenes of the Scottish Highlands. As I look in imagination over the long and misty vales, in which the eye

faintly recognizes well-known objects at a far distance ; lake, village, forest, heath, rivers and mountain beloved of yore, my heart swells with unutterable sensations.

The sun, gleaming at intervals through the misty atmosphere, sheds a flood of yellow glory on insulated portions of the landscape ; and when he sometimes rests on woods, where the varied leaves in some degree resemble the early tints of spring before the leaves have expanded, when, in the well-known words of THOMAS WARTON,

“ Various greens, in faint degrees,
Tinge the tall tops of various trees,”

And on wheat fields that have been

sown in Autumn, at once what recollections arise of that “ vernal delight and joy,” which may revive again, but of which I shall not again partake !—

I sometimes pass by rustic seats, which I formerly erected, amid favourite scenes of the forest.—Oh that it were possible to recall the feelings and advantages of that period ! I had it then in my power, had proper means been resorted to, to fulfil my duties. But it is past, and I have now only to bend beneath the chastising rod of the Almighty.

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How inimitably has Thomson descri-

bed the beauties of this most enchanting of all seasons. When I behold yon glorious sun beaming through a cloud which imparts greater magnificence to his reign ; —when I behold this beautiful earth glittering with dew, and hung with gossamer, and my feeble and dull senses are yet penetrated, and my parched brain is almost cooled by its freshness and its fragrance,—how am I filled with the bitterness of regret, to think that the folly, the vice, and depravity of mankind should render them blind to such unparaelled beauty—deaf to the music of the groves in spring, and insensible to the divine impulses of joy and gladness that are shed down in streams of warmth and glory

from the heavens, and that rise from
the dewy earth at every step which he
treads!

* * *

OF the former of these fragments I do not pretend to give any explanation. Nor can I venture to suppose that the incidents it describes are real. But that the feelings and emotions it pourtrays had actually existed in the mind of my unfortunate friend, I can have no doubt.

How few are the examples of those gifted individuals, who by nature were originally destined to become distinguished characters,—whose minds are illuminated with gleams of superior genius,—having been placed in infancy in the si-

tuation congenial to the developement of their admirable powers. And what fearful narratives of pain and misery would be unfolded, if it were possible to trace the sufferings of the many pure and elevated souls, which, though conscious of impulses and aspirations the most lofty and enchanting, have yet, by the influence of uncongenial society and unhappy education, been lost to themselves and the world, and led to untimely ruin and decay !

A few noted examples of such misfortune are on record, and will occur to the remembrance of every reader. Perhaps there is nothing more affecting than the early ruin of that admirable poet Robert

Greene, of whose "Groatsworth of Evil bought with a Million of Repentance," every bibliographer is so anxious to procure a copy at any price. I recollect once hearing Longueville talk with the deepest interest of the impression it produced on him, when he had discovered this tract in my library.

The sudden and inexplicable departure of Longueville caused acute suffering and anxiety in the susceptible mind of Matilda. To her the beautiful varieties of Nature had indeed become a universal blank. She looked around in vain for another being with whom she could have one emotion, one thought in unison. But still deeper afflictions awaited her. As

the last gleams of autumn fled away, Mr Arundel's guests one by one deserted the castle. Lady Elizabeth looked with horror on the prospect of a winter spent in the seclusion of the country. To her daughter, therefore, she addressed herself; and, unfortunately, she had sagacity enough to adopt the only mode of persuasion by which the consent of Matilda to a marriage with Lord Ashborne could ever be won. She accused her as the destroyer of the peace of mind,—the unfeeling enemy of her parents! —By a family connection with a peer of Lord Ashborne's fortune, she affirmed that Mr Arundel's ruined fortune would be retrieved, and by this measure only could that object be attained. The

mind of Matilda, enfeebled by the pressure of that sorrow,—that desolation of the heart which had been produced by Longueville's unaccountable disappearance, and worn out by the perpetual irritation of domestic misery, was at length overcome. She consented to enter into engagements with Lord Ashborne. She devoted herself a victim on the shrine of filial piety.

Meanwhile the miserable baroness, by whose machinations the mind and fortune of Longueville had been so deeply injured, was suffering the punishment of her crimes and vices. Worn out by intemperance, and haunted by the horrors of a guilty conscience, she was at length

attacked by a brain-fever, which was speedily followed by death.

When Lady Elizabeth Arundel had prevailed on her daughter to enter into a contract of marriage with Lord Ashborne, her extreme desire to change immediately from the country to a town residence, subsided ; she acquiesced in the plan of spending the winter months in the country, and looked forward with delight to the next fashionable season, when her daughter's marriage would take place, and be attended with all that ostentation and expensive brilliance on which, in her opinion, all the happiness of life depended.

Early in the following spring, Longue-

ville returned to A——. At first it seemed to me that, though worn to a skeleton, his health and spirits were rather improved. There were, at least, gleams of animation in his eye, which I had never before observed. He seemed to have formed for himself some object to live and to hope for. Under these impressions, I continued for several days, during which Longueville was but little abroad, and paid no visits, except to myself. He seemed occupied in arranging the books and papers which he had left the preceding autumn. One morning I observed he had sealed and addressed a packet, containing a book and some manuscript papers, for Matilda, and that he was preparing another, which I knew

was also intended for her ; when, on the entrance of one of those idle gossiping visitors, whose intrusions had formerly been so troublesome, almost the first topic of conversation which was introduced was the marriage of Matilda to Lord Ashborne.

Longueville had been lost in reverie, and was continuing to write, but I now perceived a sudden paleness overspread his countenance. He dropped his pen, and sat silently, as if about to faint, for a few moments, and then quitted the room. As he was known to be an invalid, I expressed apprehensions of my friend's illness,—dismissed his visitor,—and went to his apartment. After some

delay, he opened the door, which was locked inside, and said, in a voice scarcely intelligible from agitation, that he found himself rather unwell, but would be better soon, and would then walk out. We went accordingly ; and though his steps were so tottering and unequal, that but for my assistance he must have fallen, he walked on with a hurry and rapidity with which I could scarcely keep pace. He was evidently labouring under some mental emotion, which he wished to overcome by bodily exertion. At length I complained of fatigue, as we ascended an eminence ; and we sat down on the summit, which commanded a view of the beautiful village of A——— ; the woods, in which the various leaves, not yet fully

expanded, resembled the beautiful tints of autumn ; the lake, whose waters glittered in the noon-day sun ; and the haunted streams, that wandered through the landscape.

I saw that no words could give utterance to Longueville's sufferings. He had beheld the same scene a few days before ; I had then pointed out to him the situation of ——— Castle, the residence of Mr Arundel and of Matilda,—on which he had fixed his eyes with eager delight. I now saw that his recollection was dwelling on this—that, with all the bitterness of contrast, he was comparing his past and present state of mind.

But a grief, the deepest and most disinterested, had taken possession of Longueville's mind. He adored Matilda, and could even have rejoiced in her union with another, had he been assured that by such a connection her happiness would have been increased and secured. But he knew Lord Ashborne, and knew that Matilda was devoting herself a wretched victim to the caprice and the vices and tyranny of her relations.

Before the final departure of Matilda, she was twice met by Longueville. But on both occasions they were surrounded by company, and not a word was uttered by either. Nor could any power of lan-

guage describe the feelings by which they were both agonized.

For several weeks Longueville continued incessantly to wander through scenery which he had formerly visited with Matilda. At first his feelings were to the greatest degree acute. But extreme emotion soon wears out itself. His sufferings were followed by a rayless void ; a murkiness of mind too nearly allied to insanity to admit of a clear idea being formed on any subject. This last stage of mental ruin he seemed desirous to encourage ; and at length he lost wholly every trace of his former self. Neither in voice, look, nor intellect, could he be recognized as the same person ; and to

himself he was lost as completely as to others. He had, in truth, become more “like a spectre unnaturally drawn from the tomb of his rest into scenes of life and light, in which he had no longer any interest,” than one who ought to be numbered among the living.

At length I was informed, on calling one morning at Wythorpe, that he had been absent all the preceding day, and that no one had observed whether he had gone. Certain undefinable apprehensions having taken possession of my mind, I dispatched messengers in every direction to enquire for him, but in vain. Books and manuscript papers were left strewn about the apartments; and among

the rest, I perceived the following short fragment, scrawled in a hand scarcely legible, which was probably his last literary attempt.

I.

“ Now softly o’er the forest wide
 Rise the cool breezes of the night,
 And from the mountain’s flowery side
 Waft influence of serene delight;
 But me they soothe not,—all alone,
 Amid the woodland scenes I stray;
 With faltering step still wander on,
 To ceaseless agony the prey.

II.

O scenes of loveliness ! in vain
 I woo your influence to restore
 The gay and glittering trains again,
 That filled my raptured sight of yore.

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“ But I have no longer the power even of mourning over my own ruin and decay. It seems as if a fire were constantly burning in my brain, and scorching every nerve. I have no clear idea on any subject. I am awake only to the perpetual sense of agonizing pain.”

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It was not till nearly two months afterwards, that in one of the wildest and most secluded vallies of the mountains H——, a skeleton, attended by an almost expiring dog, was discovered, and recognized to be that of Longueville.

SUCH was the fate of my unhappy friend. I have little expectation that his woes will meet with sympathy ; nor do I altogether defend his character. It is quite obvious that the misfortunes of his youth were caused, in great measure, by the total want of self-controul. But there was one excuse for his frailties.—He was in SOLITUDE ! Alas ! it too frequently happens, that he who is obliged to educate himself, becomes wise only by that bitter experience, which carries with it untimely ruin and decay. In the latter period of his life, when I became ac-

quainted with his character, self-condemnation preyed on his mind and frame, and weighed down his spirit and obscured his intellects. He resigned himself to despondency.

There remains only to be told, that in the month of June, amid the fullest splendour of the most fashionable season in London, and amid every ostentatious accompaniment which wealth and luxury could bestow, Matilda was married to Lord Ashborne. For a short time she continued to support a life of feverish gaiety and miserable dissipation, during which the world of fashion were unwearyed in their applause, and the newspapers were filled with descriptions of Lady Ash-

borne's brilliant entertainments, and the charms of her beauty and conversation—till, worn out by the progress of an illness, which, as it arose from that mental desolation to which no art could administer, admitted of no cure, she obtained permission to retire to the society of that friend, to whom the letters from which I have given some extracts are addressed,—in whose arms she soon after expired.

THE END.

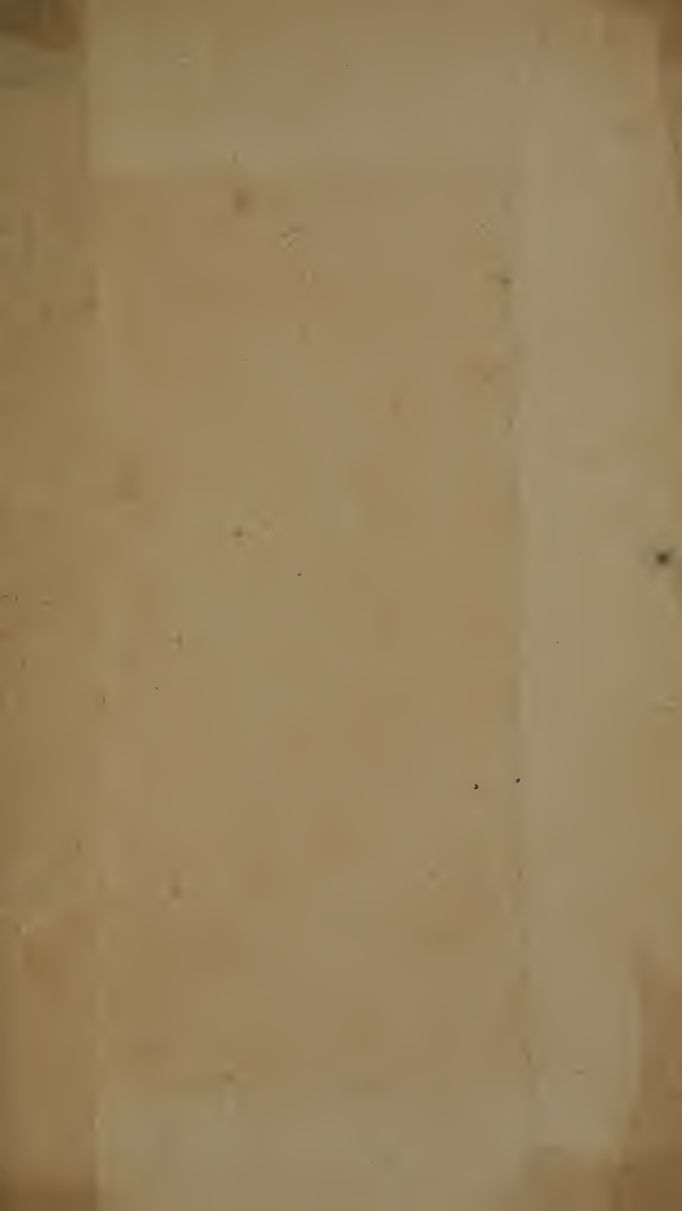
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